

WEEK 8 — OUTLINE

The Development of the Kingdom of God

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:3, 8-9; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31

« DAY 1 »

I. The Gospel of Luke is a narrative of the ministry of the incarnated Jesus as a record of the incarnated Jesus on earth; Acts is a record of the succeeding ministry of the resurrected and ascended Christ in heaven carried out through His believers on earth (1:8-9):

- A. *In the Gospels the Lord's ministry on earth, carried out by Himself, was sowing Himself as the seed of the kingdom into His believers, with no church built up yet (Luke 8:4-15).*
- B. *In Acts the Lord's ministry in heaven, carried out through His believers in His resurrection and ascension, spreads Him as the development of the kingdom of God for the building up of the church throughout the entire world to constitute His Body, His fullness, to express Him, even the fullness of God for God's expression (1:8; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:23; 3:19).*

II. The kingdom of God is the main subject of the apostles' preaching in Acts (8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31); this is indicated by the fact that the resurrected Christ, in His appearing to the apostles through a period of forty days, spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God (1:3):

A. In the Gospels the Lord Jesus Himself had announced the gospel of the kingdom (Luke 4:43):

1. The kingdom of God is the Savior as the seed of life sown into His believers, God's chosen people, and developing into a realm over which God can rule as His kingdom in His divine life (17:21; Mark 4:3, 26).
2. The entrance into the kingdom of God is regeneration, and the development of the kingdom is the believers' growth in the divine life (John 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:3-11).
3. The kingdom of God is the church life today, in which the faithful believers live, and it will develop into the coming kingdom as a reward to be inherited by the overcoming saints in the millennium (Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 20:4, 6).
4. Eventually, the kingdom of God will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal kingdom of God, an eternal realm of the eternal blessing of God's eternal life, which all of God's redeemed will enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity (21:1-4; 22:1-5, 14).
5. The kingdom of God is what the Savior announced as the gospel, the good news, to those who were alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18).
6. The Lord's word in Luke 17:20-21 indicates that the kingdom of God is not material but spiritual; it is the Savior in His first coming (vv. 21-22), in His second coming (vv. 23-30), in the rapture of His overcoming believers (vv. 31-36), and in His destroying of the Antichrist (v. 37) to recover the whole earth for His reign there (Rev. 11:15).
7. The kingdom of God is the Savior Himself, who was in the midst of the Pharisees but who is now within the believers (Luke 17:21; 2 Cor. 13:5; Col. 1:27):
 - a. Wherever the Savior is, there the kingdom of God is; the kingdom of God is with Him, and He brings it to His disciples (Luke 4:43; 17:21).

- b. Christ is the seed of the kingdom of God to be sown into God's chosen people to develop into God's ruling realm (8:5, 10).
- c. Since His resurrection He has been within His believers; hence, the kingdom of God is within the church (John 14:20; Rom. 8:10; 14:17).

« DAY 3 »

B. In Acts 1:3 the Lord Jesus as the One in resurrection must have helped the disciples to have such a proper realization concerning the kingdom of God:

1. The disciples must have begun to see that the kingdom of God is the spreading of Christ as life in the believers, that it is the propagation of Christ as life in His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life (John 3:3, 5).
2. The disciples certainly must have understood that they were now part of the propagation, the spreading, of Christ, and thereby were part of the kingdom of God (Acts 1:8-9; 8:12; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

« DAY 4 »

III. The kingdom of God is the spreading of Christ as life into His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life (2 Pet. 1:3-11):

- A. To enter into this kingdom, people need to repent of their sins and believe in the gospel so that their sins may be forgiven and so that they may be regenerated by God to have the divine life, which matches the divine nature of this kingdom (Mark 1:15; John 3:3, 5).*
- B. All the believers in Christ can share the kingdom in the church age for their enjoyment of God in His righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17).*

- C. *The kingdom of God will become the kingdom of Christ and of God for the overcoming believers to inherit and enjoy in the coming kingdom age so that they may reign with Christ for a thousand years (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 20:4, 6).*
- D. *As the eternal kingdom, the kingdom of God will be an eternal blessing of God's eternal life for all of God's redeemed to enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity (21:1-4; 22:1-5, 14, 17).*

« DAY 5 »

IV. The churches and the kingdom of God go together; the churches produced by the propagation of the resurrected Christ are the kingdom of God on earth today (Acts 14:22; 20:25):

- A. *The resurrected Christ, who is propagating Himself in His ascension, by the Spirit, and through the disciples, is the reality of the kingdom of God; the kingdom of God is His expansion (1:8; 8:12):*
1. The churches are the expansion of Christ, who came to sow Himself as the seed of the kingdom of God; this is revealed in the Gospels (Mark 4:3, 26).
 2. In the Gospels Christ was the seed of the kingdom; in the book of Acts we have the propagation of this seed to produce the churches as the kingdom of God (8:1, 12; 13:1-4).
- B. *We in the churches are the propagation of Christ and the expansion of Christ, and we are enlarging the kingdom of God (Rev. 1:9, 11).*

« DAY 6 »

V. In Acts 14:22 Paul entreated the believers who were continuing in the faith to realize that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God, because the whole world opposes our entering in; to enter into the kingdom of God is to enter into the full enjoyment of Christ as the kingdom.

VI. In Acts 19 we see that Satan is fighting against God's spreading of His kingdom on earth; the prevailing ministry for the propagation of Christ is a fighting, a battle, for God's kingdom (vv. 9, 23-41).

VII. Paul's proclaiming the kingdom of God in 28:31 was the propagation of the resurrected, ascended, and all-inclusive Christ (vv. 23, 31):

- A. This is proved by the words teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, which things go together with the kingdom of God (v. 23).*
- B. To teach concerning Christ is to spread the kingdom of God; therefore, the kingdom of God is actually the propagation of the resurrected Christ—a process that continues to be carried out through the believers today (v. 31).*

« WEEK 8 — DAY 1 »

Morning Nourishment

Acts 1:3 To whom also He presented Himself alive after His suffering by many irrefutable proofs, appearing to them through a period of forty days and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God.

8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 1:9 says, “And when He had said these things, while they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him away from their sight.” Luke’s Gospel ends with the Lord’s ascension into heaven (Luke 24:51), and his Acts begins with it. His Gospel is a narrative of the ministry of the incarnated Jesus on earth. His Acts is a record of the succeeding ministry of the resurrected and ascended Christ in heaven carried out through His believers on earth. In the Gospels, the Lord’s ministry on earth, carried out by Himself, only sowed Himself as the seed of the kingdom of God into His believers, with no church built up yet. In Acts, the Lord’s ministry in heaven, carried out through His believers in His resurrection and ascension, spreads Him as the development of the kingdom of God for the building up of the church (Matt. 16:18) throughout the entire world to constitute His Body, His fullness (Eph. 1:23), to express Him, even the fullness of God (3:19) for God’s expression. (Life-study of Acts, p. 35)

Today’s Reading

The kingdom as God’s reign in a particular way in the sense of life goes in parallel with the church. This is revealed clearly in the book of Acts, where the kingdom and the church are frequently mentioned. Many verses speak of the kingdom (Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31), and many other verses speak of the church (5:11; 8:1, 3; 9:31; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3-4, 22, 41; 16:5; 18:22; 20:17, 28). The kingdom is mentioned first. Acts 1:3 tells

us that to the apostles the Lord Jesus “presented Himself alive after His suffering by many irrefutable proofs, appearing to them through a period of forty days and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God.” This indicates strongly that the kingdom of God would be the main subject of the apostles’ preaching in the coming commission after Pentecost. Before the Lord Jesus ascended to the heavens and poured out Himself as the all-inclusive Spirit to establish the church, He taught His disciples about the kingdom. If they had not had any knowledge or realization concerning the kingdom, it would have been difficult for the Lord Jesus to bring them into the church. Therefore, in the first chapter of Acts the kingdom was taught thoroughly.

In the following chapters of Acts the church is brought in. The first mention of the church is in Acts 5:11. Acts 8:1 refers to the church in Jerusalem. Throughout the book of Acts the church is mentioned again and again. However, after the church comes in, the kingdom is still preached. In 8:12 Philip brought the good news concerning the kingdom of God to the Samaritans. Acts 14:22 says that “through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.” According to 19:8, Paul spoke boldly in the synagogue concerning the kingdom of God. Furthermore, 20:25 tells us that Paul went about proclaiming the kingdom. Finally, in 28:23 Paul “expounded these matters, solemnly testifying of the kingdom of God” to those who came to him in his lodging. From this we can see that the book of Acts begins and ends with the kingdom of God. Moreover, Acts shows us that the kingdom and the church are a pair, for the kingdom goes in parallel with the church. Without the kingdom there is neither the beginning nor the conclusion of the church life. The church life is intimately related to the kingdom because the kingdom is the life pulse of the church. Therefore, the kingdom is absolutely crucial to the church life. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 2556-2557)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 240

« WEEK 8 — DAY 2 »

Morning Nourishment

Luke 17:20-21 And when He was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, Behold, here it is! or, There! For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.

To announce the gospel of the kingdom of God is to preach the kingdom of God as the gospel, the good news. (Luke 4:43, footnote 1)

The kingdom of God is the Savior (see footnote 1 on Luke 17:21) as the seed of life sown into His believers, God's chosen people (Mark 4:3, 26), and developing into a realm over which God can rule as His kingdom in His divine life. (Luke 4:43, footnote 2)

Today's Reading

The entrance into the kingdom is regeneration (John 3:5), and the development of the kingdom is the believers' growth in the divine life (2 Pet. 1:3-11). The kingdom is the church life today, in which the faithful believers live (Rom. 14:17), and it will develop into the coming kingdom as a reward to be inherited (Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5) by the overcoming saints in the millennium (Rev. 20:4, 6). Eventually, it will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal kingdom of God, an eternal realm of the eternal blessing of God's eternal life, which all God's redeemed will enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity—Rev. 21:1-4; 22:1-5, 14....Such a kingdom, the kingdom of God, is what the Savior announced [in Luke 4] as the gospel, the good news, to those who were alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18). (Luke 4:43, footnote 2)

The Lord's answer [in Luke 17:20-21] to the question raised by the Pharisees concerning the kingdom of God indicates that the kingdom of God is not material but spiritual. It is the Savior in His first coming (vv. 21-22), in His second coming

(vv. 23-30), in the rapture of His overcoming believers (vv. 31-36), and in His destroying of the Antichrist (v. 37) to recover the whole earth for His reign there (Rev. 11:15).

Luke 17:22 through 24 prove that the kingdom of God is the Savior Himself, who was among the Pharisees when He was asked by them regarding the kingdom. Wherever the Savior is, there is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is with Him, and He brings it to His disciples (v. 22). He is the seed of the kingdom of God to be sown into God's chosen people to develop into God's ruling realm. Since His resurrection, He is within His believers (John 14:20; Rom. 8:10). Hence, the kingdom of God is within the church today (Rom. 14:17).

In Luke 17:21 the Lord said to the Pharisees, "Behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." The word you here refers to the questioning Pharisees (v. 20). The Savior as the kingdom of God was not within them; He was only in the midst of them.

When the Pharisees questioned the Lord about the coming of the kingdom of God, He answered that the kingdom of God does not come with observation. This means that the kingdom of God is not visible or observable. Rather, the kingdom of God is invisible; it is something that cannot be seen with physical eyes.

In the Lord's answer to the Pharisees, there is a strong indication that the kingdom of God is actually the Savior Himself. The Lord seems to be saying to them, "You cannot see the kingdom of God, but right now it is among you. Although the kingdom of God is here now, you do not have the spiritual perception to see it. You need spiritual eyes to see spiritual things, to see the kingdom of God. Actually, this kingdom is a wonderful person. With your physical eyes you can see the material existence of this person. But you do not have spiritual sight to perceive His spiritual reality. The spiritual reality of this person is actually the kingdom of God. Therefore, I say that the kingdom of God is now here among you. You, however, cannot perceive this spiritual reality." (Life-study of Luke, pp. 330-331)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 241

« WEEK 8 — DAY 3 »

Morning Nourishment

John 3:5 ...Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip, who announced the gospel of the kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

The Lord Jesus appeared to the disciples for a period of forty days [Acts 1:3]. In the Bible forty days are a period of trial and testing (Deut. 9:9, 18; 1 Kings 19:8). When the Lord Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, He fasted forty days and forty nights (Matt. 4:1-2). Also, the children of Israel were tested, educated, by God in the wilderness for forty years....In Acts 1 the Lord appeared and disappeared during a period of forty days in order to test and train His disciples. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 2974)

Today's Reading

During these forty days, Christ as the One in resurrection also spoke to the disciples the things concerning the kingdom of God. Although we are not told in Acts what the Lord spoke concerning the kingdom, we may infer what He said by considering other portions of the Word. In the Gospels the Lord Jesus taught the disciples much concerning the kingdom. It is not likely that during the forty days after His resurrection, He gave the disciples something new concerning the kingdom. Rather, He may have repeated what He taught them in the Gospels. When the Lord spoke regarding the kingdom in the Gospels, the disciples were not able to understand what He was teaching them. They did not have the spiritual insight to understand the kingdom of God, because the Lord was not yet in them. But in John 20 they received the wonderful person of the resurrected Christ into them as the life-giving Spirit. As a result, in Acts 1 they were very different, for Christ, the life-giving Spirit, was now within them as their life and

person. Because they had the life-giving Spirit within them, they were able to understand the Lord's speaking concerning the kingdom of God.

In Acts 1:3 the Lord Jesus as the One in resurrection must have helped the disciples to have such a proper realization concerning the kingdom of God. The disciples must have begun to see that the kingdom of God is the spreading of Christ as life to His believers, that it is the propagation of Christ as life to His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life. The disciples certainly must have understood that they were now part of the propagation, the spreading, of Christ, and thereby were part of the kingdom of God.

In Mark 4:26-29 the Lord Jesus told the parable of the kingdom seed. "So is the kingdom of God: as if a man cast seed on the earth, and sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and lengthens—how, he does not know. The earth bears fruit by itself: first a blade, then an ear, then full grain in the ear" (vv. 26-28). The man is the Lord Jesus as the sower. The seed is Christ Himself as the seed of life sown into us. This parable reveals that the kingdom of God is a matter of life, the life of God, which sprouts, grows, bears fruit, matures, and produces a harvest. The kingdom is not a matter of lifeless organization through man's wisdom and ability. The kingdom in its reality is a matter of Christ as the seed of life sown into us and growing in us unto maturity.

The kingdom's reality is also seen in Christ's expansion as the enlargement. Christ's expansion is His growth within us, and His expansion is His enlargement.

Revelation 1:6 tells us that we have been made the kingdom of God. Christ released us from our sins by His blood (v. 5) and made us a kingdom. The believers redeemed by the blood of Christ have not only been born of God into His kingdom (John 3:5) but have also been made a kingdom for God's economy, which is the church (Matt. 16:18-19). John, the writer of the book of Revelation, was in the kingdom (Rev. 1:9), and all redeemed and reborn believers are also part of this kingdom (Rom. 14:17).

We are God's kingdom because we are the expansion of Christ, His enlargement. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 2974-2975, 2638-2639)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 250

<< WEEK 8 — DAY 4 >>

Morning Nourishment

2 Pet. 1:10-11 Therefore, brothers, be the more diligent to make your calling and selection firm, for doing these things you shall by no means ever stumble. For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly and bountifully supplied to you.

We have pointed out that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of the divine life. We may use the human kingdom as an illustration. Just as mankind is a kingdom of the human life, so the kingdom of God is a kingdom of the divine life. If we were not human beings, we could not understand the kingdom of human life. Dogs, for example, cannot understand the human kingdom, because they do not have a human life. But if a dog could receive the human life, it would then be able to understand the human kingdom. In a similar way, we know the kingdom of God by the divine life because God's kingdom is a kingdom of the divine life. (Life-study of Acts, p. 28)

Today's Reading

As those who have received the divine life, we not only know what the kingdom of God is; we become parts of this kingdom. If a dog could be born of the human life and thereby become a human being, this human being would automatically become a part of the human kingdom. Do you not have the divine life? Yes, you have the divine life, and because you have this life you are part of the kingdom of God. Although we can understand these matters, it is impossible to explain them to unregenerated people.

In asking the question recorded in Acts 1:6, the disciples apparently were forgetting the divine life that was within them. Their concept was related to the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. This traditional concept was in the minds of all Jews. Peter, John, James, and the other disciples had the concept that the kingdom of Israel would be restored. Day by day they were hoping for the

restoration of the kingdom of Israel. However, in 1:3 we are told that the Lord spoke to them not about the kingdom of Israel but about the kingdom of God.

Knowing the kingdom of God requires spiritual perception, spiritual insight. Without spiritual insight, it is impossible for us to know the kingdom of God. Those who are lacking in spiritual perception may think that to enter into the kingdom of God is to go to heaven. In general, this is the natural concept of fallen mankind concerning God's kingdom.

The kingdom of God is the ruling, the reigning, of God with all its blessing and enjoyment. It is the goal of the gospel of God and of Jesus Christ. To enter into this kingdom people need to repent of their sins and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15) so that their sins may be forgiven and that they may be regenerated by God to have the divine life, which matches the divine nature of this kingdom (John 3:3, 5).

All the believers in Christ can share the kingdom in the church age for their enjoyment of God in His righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). It will become the kingdom of Christ and of God for the overcoming believers to inherit and enjoy in the coming kingdom age (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5), so that they may reign with Christ one thousand years (Rev. 20:4, 6). Then, as the eternal kingdom, it will be an eternal blessing of God's eternal life for all of God's redeemed to enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity (Rev. 21:1-4; 22:1-5, 14, 17).

The kingdom of God is the reality of the church brought forth by the resurrection life of Christ through the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15). Regeneration is its entrance (John 3:5), and the growth of the divine life within the believers is its development (2 Pet. 1:3-11).

We have seen that the entrance into the kingdom is regeneration and that the development of the kingdom is the believer's growth in the divine life. The kingdom of God is the church life today, in which the faithful believers live (Rom. 14:17), and it will develop into the coming kingdom as an inheritance reward (Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5) to the overcoming saints in the millennium. (Life-study of Acts, pp. 28, 30, 26-28)

Further Reading: Life-study of Acts, msg. 4-5

« WEEK 8 — DAY 5 »

Morning Nourishment

Acts 14:22 Establishing the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.

Rev. 1:9 I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

The churches produced by Christ's propagation are the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is a sphere of life produced by the propagation of Christ. Actually the kingdom is the expansion of this resurrected, propagating One. The resurrected Christ, who is propagating Himself in His ascension, by the Spirit, and through the disciples, is the reality of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is His expansion. (Life-study of Acts, p. 14)

Today's Reading

We may use the kingdom of man, the human kingdom, for an illustration of the kingdom of God as the expansion of Christ. In the beginning, there was just one man, Adam. Then Adam began to expand, to increase. The kingdom of man was a couple, and then this couple brought forth children. In this way the kingdom of man expanded from one man to a family. Now the entire human race is part of the kingdom of man. The kingdom of man is simply mankind as the expansion of the man, Adam.

The kingdom of God is the expansion of God, whose embodiment is Christ. This expansion of Christ is the churches. The churches are the expansion of Christ as the One who came to sow Himself as the seed of the kingdom of God....In the Gospels Christ was the seed of the kingdom. In the book of Acts we have the propagation of this seed to produce the churches as the kingdom of God.

Perhaps you would say that Acts has twenty-eight chapters. This, of course, is correct. However, it is also true to say that the book of Acts is still being written because the propagation of the resurrected Christ is still taking place....Even today a portion of a chapter may have been written. This writing is the propagation of the resurrected Christ, and this propagation is the expansion of Christ to be the kingdom of God. We in the churches are the propagation of Christ and the expansion of Christ, and we are enlarging the kingdom of God.

The subject of the book of Acts [is] the propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension, by the Spirit, through the disciples, for the producing of the churches—the kingdom of God....The kingdom is the churches, and the churches are the propagation of Christ.

The more we are impressed with the subject of Acts, the more we shall say, “Lord, we worship You as the resurrected One and the ascended One. We praise You for Your propagation. We thank You, Lord, that we are Your propagation today. We thank You that we are with You in the heavens and that the churches are the kingdom of God.” Let us declare to the whole universe that the Lord Jesus is now in the heavens, and that as the exalted One He is now propagating Himself on earth through us as His witnesses. (Life-study of Acts, pp. 14-15)

In Acts 14:22 Paul and Barnabas told the disciples that “through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.”...While we are suffering today, we are in the kingdom where we are being exercised, trained, prepared, and qualified to reign in Christ’s kingdom as His co-kings.

To enter into the kingdom of God is to enter into the full enjoyment of Christ as the kingdom.

However, the whole world opposes the entering of God’s people into the full enjoyment of Christ as the kingdom. Throughout the centuries, religion in particular has been used by God’s enemy to keep God’s people from entering into the full enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ as the kingdom of God. For this reason, it is through many tribulations that we enter into the kingdom of God. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 1731)

Further Reading: Life-study of Acts, msg. 40

« WEEK 8 — DAY 6 »

Morning Nourishment

Acts 28:23 ...Many came to him at his lodging, to whom he expounded these matters, solemnly testifying of the kingdom of God and persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning until evening.

31 Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered.

In Ephesus Paul's preaching was prevailing and caused people to talk about the idols in that city. The craftsmen were concerned that their business would come into disrepute (Acts 19:27).

[One who made silver shrines said], "This Paul has persuaded and perverted a considerable number, saying that the gods being made by hands are no gods at all" (v. 26)....Making...silver shrines was a dirty and demonic trade, a trade that cooperated with the demons to possess and usurp people for Satan's evil kingdom (Matt. 12:26). Behind the idol worship were demons who instigated the uproar against the apostle to disturb and frustrate the preaching of the gospel. This was Satan's fight against God's spreading of His kingdom on the earth. (Life-study of Acts, pp. 450, 449-450)

Today's Reading

In Acts 19:23-41 we see an important principle. This principle is that if we stay in a locality for a longer time we should have a prevailing ministry, a ministry that is able to stir up others....Before [Paul] arrived, the city was peaceful, worshipping the idol of Artemis. But Paul's presence in Ephesus eventually caused a great disturbance....He carried on a prevailing ministry, and that ministry stirred up the entire city, affecting the society. This indicates that if we stay in a particular place, our ministry should be so prevailing that it stirs up the situation there in the right way.

If we follow this pattern, we shall cause trouble through the prevailing preaching of the gospel.

If your work is truly prevailing, eventually this prevailingness will touch the heart of the power of darkness. In Ephesus the heart of the power of darkness was the temple of the goddess Artemis. The more the Ephesians became believers in the Lord, the less influence this temple had. Apparently, the disturbance was caused by certain craftsmen. Actually, it was stirred up by the demons who were behind the scene.

Our ministry is to propagate the resurrected Christ as God's kingdom. But today every city is the kingdom of the devil. Hence, the prevailing ministry for the propagation of Christ is a fighting, a battle, for God's kingdom. The whole earth is the kingdom of darkness. If we are very kind and gentle in carrying out our work, seeking to please everyone, no opposition will be stirred up, no matter how long we stay in a certain place. If our ministry is truly prevailing, there is bound to be opposition.

We all need to realize that a battle is raging between God and Satan. Therefore, we need to be certain that whatever we do is absolutely on the side of the kingdom of God and that nothing is involved with the kingdom of darkness.

Acts 28:31 says that during the two years Paul was in his rented dwelling in Rome, he was "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered." The kingdom of God is one of the emphases of this book. Luke's writing both begins (Acts 1:3) and ends with the kingdom of God.

Paul's proclaiming the kingdom of God was the propagation of the resurrected Christ. How do we know this? The fact that the proclaiming of the kingdom is the propagation of the resurrected Christ is proved by the words teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ in 28:31. This indicates that the kingdom of God goes together with the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. To teach people the things concerning Christ is to spread the kingdom of God. Therefore, the kingdom of God is actually the propagation of the resurrected Christ. (Life-study of Acts, pp. 450-452, 621)

Further Reading: Life-study of Acts, msg. 52

WEEK 8 — HYMN

Man's Creator has a purpose The Kingdom — The Seed of the Kingdom

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1. Man's Cre - at - or has a pur - pose For our be - ing here on earth.
In His i - mage we're cre - at - ed, To ex - press His rule on earth.
But man fell to Sa - tan's tempt - ing; Thus God's goal was hid from view.
Still our God will have His king - dom, For His Son will see it through.

Chords: Bb, F7, Bb, Eb, Bb/D, Eb, F, Bb, Bb, F7, Gm, Eb, Bb/D, Eb, F7, Bb, Gm, D, Eb, D, Bb, C7, F7, Bb, Bb/F, Gm, Eb, Bb/D, Eb, F7, Bb.

2. Jesus Christ will get His kingdom
Notwithstanding Satan's plans;
He's obtaining something real by
Growing in the hearts of man.
Nothing like religion teaches:
"You must wait until you die"—
For the kingdom Christ is building,
Is on earth before our eyes.

3. His Son, Jesus, is our Savior.
Once in human form He came.
Now as Spirit He can enter
As the breath of life to man.
As a seed within our spirit
Christ takes root and starts to grow,
Spreading in our inmost being
Till His life we come to know.

4. Time is short, oh, brothers, hear it,
Christ is longing for His Bride.
We can hasten His returning
Simply by the growth in life.
No more struggling, no more striving,
Simply turn to Christ within.
See the seed begin to blossom.
Growing fully into Him.

5. Jesus Christ will get His kingdom
Just by growth—the normal way.
Not an instant transformation;
Growth goes on from day to day.
This life-seed is all-inclusive—
Everything we'll ever need;
Yes, our God's eternal purpose
Is within this precious seed.